# What Lies Ahead

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Summary: Master Chief and Cortana crash land on an unknown planet in an unknown time, where they are discovered by Commander Shepard and her crew. Yet again Master Chief is thrown into a battle that spans the entire galaxy.

## 1. Chapter 1

**A/N -** Well, this is my first attempt at writing a Halo fic. I just happen to be playing Mass Effect at the time and thought this would be a great game to X-over with the Halo Series. If you can't tell, It starts off just after Halo 3.

Review if you feel like it. Thx!

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><p>Chapter One

"_Chiefâ€¦ can you hear me?"_

Master Chief groaned as his bones creaked and squeaked as he emerged from his stasis pod. He blinked a few times to let his eyes adjust to the surroundings after being closed for so long. He floated over to where Cortana's image was projected onto a nearby terminal.

"How long has it been?" Chief asked.

"Approximately five years chief. But that's not our main concern right now," Cortana answered, looking to get straight to business, "We're rapidly approaching a planet that I cannot identify. We have to evac. The _Dawn_ can't handle an atmosphere entrance in its current condition."

"How much time?" Chief asked, already reaching for his battle rifle, which was attached to the wall nearby.

A string of ones and zeroes passed through Cortana's body. "Since I can't slow us down, and at our current speed and trajectory, I'd say five minutes maximum."

"Any ideas?" Chief said, looking around him for more of his weapons.

"Our only option would be to use an escape pod. Even then, it's still risky. I'll explain the details as we make our way to it. Now yank me," Cortana said, her image disappearing. John put his hand on the console and felt the familiar tingle as Cortana entered his suit.

"It's good to be back in here," Cortana noted. "Now, let's get a move on. You're going to have toâ€¦" The Chief scoffed as he left the room as Cortana detailed their escape

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Master Chief had filled the escape pod with as much ammo, weapons, and rations he could find, not knowing what was waiting for him.

"Thirty seconds until atmosphere entrance," Cortana's voice chimed.

"Do you know anything about where we're going?" Chief asked, as he did a mental count of his ammo.

"Well, I've determined that the atmosphere is breathable, but almost ninety percent of it is covered in lava. Our percentage of landing on dry land isâ€”"

"I'd prefer not to know," Chief said, cutting her off. "How far are we from Earth?"

"Frankly, I don't know. As a matter of fact, I have no record of this system we're in at all. We could be millions of light years away," Cortana answered.

Master Chief frowned, but his thoughts were interrupted as the pod shook violently.

"Hold on Chief, we're entering the planet's atmosphere, it's going to beâ€”wait! I've detected contacts! Stand by, we could be landing somewhere where we're not welcomed," Cortana's voice came, clearly alarmed.

"How comforting," the chief said as he grabbed onto the sides for support. Again, the pod shook violently and the chief sneaked a peak through window. He could see flames as friction from the atmosphere pressed onto them. After about a minute, the flames died down, and he could see what appeared to be land rapidly approaching.

"Brace yourself chief!" Cortana's voice shouted just as the pod made contact with the ground. Master Chief's head slammed on the bulkhead behind him, almost causing him to lose consciousness, but somehow fought off the pending darkness that tried to overtake him.

"Chief, are you alright?" Cortana's voice filtered through as he fought off a massive headache.

"I'll live," he said, already sure that he had a slight concussion.

"You'd better, because I detect a contact closing in on our position. Be alert."

Chief confirmed this as dot emerged onto his radar. What was strange was that it was identified as friendly, but Chief wasn't going to take any chances. He readied the nearest weapon, which was an SMG. With no other option, Chief reached up and opened the hatch, SMG at the ready. As soon as it opened, he was met with a weapon in his face. The Chief alertly raised his own weapon.

"Well, you're certainly not geth," came a voice. A second later, a woman's face popped into Master Chief's view. "So who are you?" the woman asked, gun still pointed in Chief's face.

"You first," the Chief said, not budging.

"Straight to the point are we? Well, I'm Commander Alice Shepard of the Alliance Navy."

"Never heard of it," Chief replied, weapon still at the ready.

The woman, Shepard, frowned. "You've never heard of the Alliance Navy? Are you lost? Who are you?"

Chief was about to respond, but Cortana beat him to it. "We're from the United Nations Space Command."

"Never heard of it," Shepard replied, "And why do you speak in two different voices?"

"She's my AI, Cortana. She helps me out in the battlefield," Chief responded.

Shepard and Master Chief stared each other down for what seemed like forever. "Well, you're definitely not a geth, and you're not hostile," Shepard lowered her weapon, raised her arm and signaled, causing two more hidden people to emerge, which Chief didn't even spot. "It's okay, the coast is clear," she shouted.

Hearing this, Master Chief lowered his weapon as well, more than happy to avoid a firefight. "What is this planet?" he asked as he lifted himself out of the pod. He stood straight up, about two feet taller than Shepard, who was standing next to him.

"You're on Therum," a new voice responded. Chief looked over to see another young woman inspecting her pistol. She locked eyes with him, and for a second, the Chief was lost. But it didn't last long as a rough voice cut through.

"Nice landing," Master Chief looked over and was surprised to see what looked like a giant lizard, except it (or he?) was as tall and big as the Chief himself, and carried a shotgun. Wondering what he (or it) was talking about, he looked down to see that his pod had crashed down onto what looked to be the remains of a large

machine.

"You certainly did us a favour," said the woman inspecting her pistol. "I'm Ashley Williams, and this giant heap next to me is Wrex."

"Fifty credits say 'this giant heap' could whoop your ass," Wrex replied smoothly.

"Can it you two. We still have to find that Asari named Liara. We don't have all day," Shepard said, trying to get back on track.

"Asari? What's that?" Cortana asked, her voice booming through Chief's helmet speakers.

Wrex and Williams stopped bickering and stared at the Chief like he was crazy. "You've never heard of the Asari?" Williams asked, clearly shocked, "Damn! You're **definitely** not from around here!"

Master Chief just shrugged.

"Look, we'll discuss that later. But for now, we need to get going," Shepard said, readying her weapon, which looked like a supped up UNSC standard assault rifle. "Would you care to join us?" she said, holding out her open hand towards Master Chief.

Master Chief gave it only a seconds' thought before reaching out his own arm and shaking the Commander's hand. "Might as well. You seem to know what you are doing."

Shepard laughed. "Nah, were kinda just wingin' it as we go. Welcome aboard Master Chief, if you're okay with me calling you that."

"That'll do, ma'am."

"Okay then. My partners and I will search the dead for any upgrades while you get yourself loaded up," And with that, Shepard raised her arm and signaled again, then jogged off in another direction.

"You sure about this Chief?" Can we trust them?" Cortana asked as he began to load up as much weapons, ammo, and grenades as he could walk with.

"We don't have much of a choice. Maybe they'll be able to help us figure out just where the hell we are. Plus, I'm not fond of the idea of sitting out here in the open with no means of escape," he replied smoothly. "Besides, I'm kind of just wingin' it as well," he finished, quoting Shepard.

"You don't have a plan?" Cortana asked, mildly surprised.

"Please, I've been improving ever since we landed on Alpha Halo."

"I knew it! You bastard!" Cortana said, sounding _almost_ offended.

Master Chief could practically picture her smirk as he approached the Commander, trying to fight off his own smirk, failing miserably.

For the umpteenth time in his life, the Master Chief was walking into a situation not knowing what lied ahead of him.

Like it bothered **him** any.

2. Chapter 2

Hey guys, sorry for the long wait. For the first chapter I received some messages/reviews describing some things that didn't fit, and hopefully with this chapter, that has been fixed.

N'Joy and don't forget to review!

* * *

><p><br>Chapter Two**

Commander Shepard stopped short of the mine entrance and turned towards Master Chief. "One quick thing. It might be best that we don't tell anybody about your 'other half'," she said.

Before the Chief could respond, Cortana's voice blasted through his helmet speakers. "Is there a problem?"

"Well, I'm not sure about where you're from, but here, any form of Artificial Intelligence is very unpopular and considered highly dangerous and illegal."

At this, the Chief raised an eyebrow, and the commander continued. "Various attempts at AI have been largely unsuccessful. They either don't last long or the AI goes off the deep end."

"I can assure you that is not going to happen anytime soon," Cortana chimed in, defending herself.

"I know plenty of mercenaries who would do _anything_ to get their hands on a piece of technology like that." Wrex said, inspecting his shotgun.

"If the wrong person finds out, information like that would spread quickly across the galaxy," Williams said, looking at the Chief. "But as long as you're with us, your secret is safe," she finished, flashing a smile. To confirm this, Shepard nodded her head, as did Wrex.

"Thanks for the heads up," Master Chief said, nodding his head as well. His respect for Shepard and her team went up a few notches. "You got that Cortana?" Chief asked in a voice only she could hear.

"You know me Chief. I always seem to get us into trouble," she responded.

"Ha, ha," the Chief dryly laughed. Again he could practically see Cortana smirking.

"Let's get going," Shepard said, leading the way as the entrance to the mine shaft opened.

"One more thing," Chief whispered as he was the last to enter, "How did Commander Shepard and her team show up as friendly contacts?"

"Oh, about that. While you were asleep, I kept busy by maintaining the functions of your suit. I must of forgotten to fix that. I can change it back, but until I can get the proper information coded in, Commander Shepard and her team will read as hostiles," Cortana said. To confirm this, the Chief glanced as his radar, and indeed, Shepard, Wrex, and Williams were marked with red blips.

Master Chief and the others moved forward down the tunnel until what looked to be a machine appeared at the end.

"Kill them all!" Wrex shouted, firing off his shotgun.

Just as the Chief was switching to his Battle Rifle, Commander Shepard raised her arm and a blue light shot out towards the machine, lifting it into the air and disabling its movement. Not having time to question what just happened, the Chief took advantage and fired off a few rounds to its head, and a few seconds later it fell to the ground.

The team moved forward and out of the tunnel until they reached another pathway which led to an elevator, where two more hostile machine were waiting, Again, Shepard sent out a blue light and the enemies were lifted into the air, which Master Chief again took advantage.

"I can get used this," Chief noted as the four boarded the elevator. The elevator brought them down for a good minute until it began to creak and sparks flew from the sides until it finally screeched to a halt and the doors fell open, revealing a damaged platform. As soon as they exited, a voice emerged from below them.

"Ummm, helloâ€¦? Could somebody help me? Please?"

Master Chief was the first to locate the voice and turned to see somebody closed in by a large blue barrier. The Chief took a closer look and saw the person looked strikingly like a female human, except her skin was blue and instead of hair, the top of her head was curved elegantly.

"Let me," Shepard said as she approached. Master Chief nodded and stepped back.

"Can you hear me out there? I'm trapped!" said the blue female.

"Liara T'Soni I presume?" questioned Shepard.

"Thank the Goddess! I did not think anyone would come looking for me. Listen, this thing I'm in, it's a Prothean device and I can't get out of it." Liara said.

"How'd you get stuck in there?" Shepard responded.

"I hid in here when the geth showed up."

"Wait, you mean those machines?" questioned Master Chief.

"Yes. Can you believe itâ€”geth beyond the veil!" she responded, quite surprised.

The Chief just shook his head. Rarely was he uninformed about things. This was one of those times, and he didn't like it.

"Your mother is working with Saren. Who's side are you on?" Shepard questioned harshly.

"What?! I am not on anybody's side!" Liara answered, clearly offended. "Look, I may be Benezia's daughter, but I am nothing like her. We haven't spoken in years. Please, just get me out of here!"

"We'll figure something out," Shepard said.

"You'll have to find a way around the barrier. The mine's defenses can only be shut down from in here. And be carefulâ€”there is a Krogan with the geth. They've been trying for days to get through the barrier."

Shepard nodded. "Let's figure out a way around this." She led everyone off the platform onto the ground below where instantly more machines came out of various spots. On reaction, Master Chief threw a sticky grenade before taking cover. The grenade stuck to one of the machine's heads, exploding a second later. Because of this, the robots looked momentarily stunned, so Shepard, Williams, and Wrex took advantage and took care of the rest of the enemies.

"What kind of grenade was that?" Shepard asked after the last of the enemy was killed.

"A plasma grenade. It sticks and fuses to enemies. Once it's on, it isn't coming off," Chief said, taking out another one and showing it to everybody. Shepard asked for one, so the Chief gave it to her.

Upon searching, they came across a terminal which controlled the large mining laser that was hung from the ceiling. Shepard messed with it and manage to input the correct code and it fired, tearing through the rock, leaving a hole, which led to the platform below. The team went into the hole and down to the platform, which led to a large elevator, which they then took up to the next platform, which held Liara.

"Oh, how did you get in here? I didn't think there was anyway past the barrier," she said, surprised.

"We blasted through with the mining laser," Shepard said, approaching Liara

"Yes, that makes sense. But please, just get me out here before more geth arrive! That console over there should shut down this containment field," Liara said, anxious to get out. Shepard approached the console and again messed with it until what was holding Liara disappeared, and she fell to the ground.

"Iâ€”I still cannot believe all this. Why would the geth come after

me? Is Benezia involved?" she spoke, firing many questions.

"Uh, hello! Saren's looking for the conduit and you're a Prothean expert. Get the picture?" Williams responded sarcastically.

"The conduit? I don't--" Liara began, but was cut off as the ground shook violently.

"What the hell was that!?" Wrex shouted, looking around.

Cortana took the opportunity to speak. "These caves are obviously not stable. The mining laser must have triggered an seismic event. We have to hurry. In a few minutes these caves are coming down. Let's not be here when that happens."

"Joker! Get the Normandy airborne and lock on my signal. On the double mister!" Shepard shouted into her radio.

"If I die in here I'll kill him!" Wrex said, as the elevator activated, bringing them upward.

The elevator stopped at the top of the shaft, and waiting for them was a Krogan, who was flanked by three machines. The Master Chief raised his assault rifle and pointed it towards the Krogan, but Shepard held up her hand.

"Surrender!" The Krogan spoke gruffly, "or don't. That would be more fun."

"These Krogan characters remind me vaguely of brutes," Cortana quietly noted to Chief, who couldn't help but agree

"Is there a reason you're in my way?" Shepard replied.

"The same reason, you're here; the Asari. Hand the doctor over."

"Whatever it is you want, you're not getting it from me," Liara said, hiding behind Shepard.

"Is this really the time?" Shepard asked as rubble fell from the ceiling

"Yep. This is the perfect setting for a life and death struggle. Kill them," the Krogan said, turning to his friends, "Spare the Asari if you can. If not, it doesn't matter."

Master Chief fired off a few rounds before taking cover behind one of the pillars that supported the elevator, and he found himself using the same pillar for cover as Williams was.

"How do we handle this thing?" Master Chief asked calmly as what seemed to be a fire bolt whizzed by his head.

"That Krogan's shields make him invincible for extended periods of time. We can't do shit until they're disabled!" Williams shouted over the fire of her gun. The Chief confirmed this statement when he looked over to see Shepard and Wrex firing all they had towards the Krogan, but he wasn't even slowing down.

So Chief concentrated his fire on one of the machines that had the defenseless Liara pinned down in the middle, hiding behind a console. He fired until the machine's head fell off in two pieces, just as his assault rifle ran out of ammo. He put it away and pulled out his battle rifle, which only had about half a clip left, which he then promptly used on one of the other machines who was also trying to capture Liara. Now, he was only left with a measly plasma pistol to fight off the Krogan Battlemaster. Everybody was now concentrating their fire on the Krogan, but with little effect, as the Battlemaster's shields were just too strong.

"This is going nowhere!" Wrex shouted as fire rained down upon them.

"I've got an idea," the Chief said, charging his plasma pistol and firing the energized shot at the Krogan, which hit him square in the chest. The blue orb that surrounded him, indicating his shields, turned red then faded.

"His shields are down! Give him everything!" Shepard shouted. She and Wrex fired their shotguns, Williams her assault rifle, Chief his pistol, and even Liara contributed with some biotics. After several seconds of constant fire and biotics, the Krogan Battlemaster finally fell to the ground, gurgling out curses until Shepard finished him off with a final shot to the head.

More debris fell from the ceiling. "We're out of time! We have to move!" Cortana said through Chief's helmet speakers.

"Let's go!" Shepard shouted, grabbing Liara and running towards the exit. The Master Chief was the last one to start running, but easily caught up using his superior speed. They were doing their best to avoid the large pieces of the ceiling and ground that were collapsing. As soon as they got off the platform, it fell into pieces. Just as they were reaching the exit, a very large boulder fell, sealing off the exit.

"Damn! We can't move this. It's too large!" Shepard shouted, even trying her biotics to lift the boulder.

"Let me," the Chief said, quickly approaching the boulder. He got the best grip he could and with all his strength, he began to lift the boulder, and with one final heave, he lifted and moved it far enough so there was the smallest bit of room to slip through.

"Go go go!" Shepard shouted. They all ran past the boulder and out of then entrance, just as the rest of the mineshaft collapsed inwardly. Back outside, everybody was out of breath, panting heavily.

"By the gods," Liara gasped out, "How were you able to move that boulder? It had to of weighed several tons at the least!"

Everyone turned towards the Chief, who just shrugged. "I work out," he said.

"Well-- there's obviously more to you than meets the eye," Shepard said. "Collect whatever you need out of your escape pod, because we're getting off this damn planet before we melt."

"Yes ma'am."

"That was a close shave Chief," Cortana noted as he quickly gathered as much supplies as he could.

Again, Chief just shrugged.

"All in a day's work."

3. Chapter 3

**Long time no see. Horribly long wait for this chapter, and that's my fault. Mass Effect 2 is out now, and I eagerly want to get to that part in this story, so expect updates to be more frequent as I try to make up for lost time. **

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**Chapter Three**

Master Chief now stood in the briefing room of the SSV Normandy as Commander Shepard introduced him to everybody else.

"Everyone, this is the Master Chief. He has decided to join us in our search of Saren. Chief, this is my squad. Over there is Alenko, Garrus, and Tali. The others you've already met."

Master Chief nodded his head in greeting, as did the others.

"That Garrus fellow reminds me of the Arbiter for some reason," Cortana noted privately. Chief grunted in response.

"Too close Commander! Ten more seconds and we're swimming in molten sulfur. The Normandy isn't equipped to land in exploding volcanoes. They tend to...fry our sensors and melt our hull," a voice said over the room's intercom.

"We almost died out there and your pilot is making jokes!?" Liara said, disturbed.

"It's a coping mechanism. You'll get used to it," Shepard said casually.

"I see...it must be a human thing. I don't have a lot of experience dealing with your species Commander. But I am grateful to you. You saved my life back there, and not just from the volcano. Those geth would've killed me or dragged me off to Saren."

"What did Saren want with you? Do you know something about the conduit?" Alenko said, getting into the conversation.

Master Chief decided to sit this one out if he could. It was a good opportunity to find out what was going on in this time.

"Only this it is somehow connected to the Prothean extinction," Liara responded, continuing. "That's my real expertise. I've spent the past fifty years investigating what happened to them."

"How old are you exactly? Shepard asked, eyebrow raised.

"I'm ashamed to admit, but I'm only a hundred and six."

"Damn!" Williams exclaimed. "I hope I look that good at your age!"

"A century seems like a long time to a short lived species like yours. But among my people I'm barely considered more than a child. That's why my research hasn't received the proper attention. Because of this, many older scholars have dismissed my theories about the Protheans," Liara said.

"Hell, I've got my own theory about what happened to the Protheans," Shepard commented.

"With all due respect, I've heard every theory out there. The problem is that there is very little evidence to support almost any theory. The Protheans somehow left very little behind. But here's the strange thing. According to my findings, the Protheans were not the first galactic to mysteriously vanish. This cycle was started long before their time."

Shepard turned her mouth to one side. "Where do you get this theory? I thought you just said there wasn't any evidence."

Liara sighed. "I've been doing this for fifty years, so I've tracked down almost every piece of evidence. Eventually, certain patters start to emerge. Ones that hint at the truth." Shepard raised an eyebrow, but Liara continued. "It is...difficult to explain to somebody else. I cannot point to one specific thing to support my theory. It is more of... a feeling drawn up by a half century of tedious research. Eventually I will be able to fully prove that there were other civilizations before the Protheans. This cycle of extinction has repeated itself many times over. I've dedicated my life figuring out what caused the Protheans to vanish so suddenly."

"They were wiped out by a race of sentient machines... the Reapers," Shepard said, looking at Liara.

"Whâ€”what? The Reapers? But I've never heard of-- what evidence do you have to support this?" Liara shot back, surprised.

"There was a damaged beacon on Eden Prime. It burned some kind of vision into my mind. I'm still trying to tie up the loose ends."

"Visions?" Liara said. "Yes, that makes sense. The beacons were designed to transmit information directly into the user's mind. Finding one that still works is extremely rare. No wonder the geth attacked Eden Prime. A beacon, even if badly damaged, is almost worth any kind of risk."

"Okay, this isn't helping us find Saren or the Conduit," Williams noted harshly.

"Of course. I'm sorryâ€”my scientific curiosity got the better of me. Unfortunately, I do not have any information that could be of major use at the moment," Liara said, embarrassed.

"There's gotta be a reason why Saren wanted you out of the picture," said Shepard. "But I think it'd benefit us all if you stayed with us for the time being."

"Thank you Commander," Liara said, standing up and moving towards Shepard, "I cannot think of any safer place than aboard your ship. And my knowledge might be useful later on."

"Glad to have you aboard," Shepard said, patting Liara on the shoulder. "Now, are the any more questions?" Shepard looked around the room.

"Just one," the Turian, Garrus, said. "What about him," he pointed to Master Chief, who said nothing, "can we trust him?'

"Well shit, he ain't geth," Wrex rumbled. "You know there are other threats out there," Williams replied, thus triggering more conversation as everyone began to talk at once.

"This is getting out of control," Cortana noted to the Chief, who nodded slightly. "We need to explain ourselves. Do you want me to start off?"

"Shoot," chief replied.

"Look," Cortana boomed over the Chief's speakers, causing everyone to turn towards him, "We don't know who the Protheans or this Saren character is, but if you let us explain, you might get some answers."

"What!?" exclaimed Alenko, "What black hole have you been living in? Everyone knows who the Protheans are!"

Shepard held up a hand for silence, "Explain."

"You want to tackle this Chief?" Cortana asked, in which he nodded.

"Wait, there are two of you?" Garrus asked, confused.

"That will be explained later," Shepard said. "Whenever you're ready Chief."

The Chief sighed; might as well start from the beginning. "Where I'm from, humans are fighting a massive war against a band of alien races calling themselves the Covenant. The aliens declared war on us, where they began by wiping out our colonized planets one by one."

"Whole planets!?" Tali, whose face was hidden behind a mask, exclaimed. "There's no such firepower."

"They didn't blow them up per say. They evaporated all the water and burned all the foliage. No one survives. Eventually, they pushed us to our last military stronghold planet, where we had no chance and were over run. I managed to escape onto a ship making a last run for survivors, which then made a blind jump into space to lure away the Covenant."

Master Chief paused for a second, trying not to think of his former

teammates and friends.

"After exiting the jump, we came across an artificial ring world. Because the Covenant had followed us in our escape, our ship was forced to crash-land onto the ring, where some of the Covenant had already settled in. Long story short, I destroyed this Halo before it could be activated."

"Why destroy it?" asked a curious Williams, "Such a discovery could turn the whole tide of the war."

Cortana then cut in. "The Covenant believed that the main weapon was a source that propelled them into what they called the 'Great Journey'. In actuality, the Halo is a super weapon that wipes out all life within its 25,000 light year range. The Covenant was hell bent on activating it, so drastic measures were taken to ensure the ring was not fired."

"Jesus," Alenko muttered.

Master Chief continued. "Since then, I've defended Earth from Covenant invasion, fought on another Halo, infiltrated the Covenant's holy city, and prevented the Covenant's leader from activating the rest of the Halos. All of this work has also earned me the nickname of 'Demon' among the Covenant."

"Impressive," Wrex growled, "The enemy fears _and_ respects you. A definition of a true warrior."

"This still doesn't explain how you got here," Shepard noted. "But it's starting to make sense, I suppose."

Again Cortana took over. "During our last escape attempt, the portal we had activated closed before our ship could fully enter. While one half arrived to the correct coordinates, our half of the ship was sent to an unknown origin, where we drifted for a fair amount of time before being forced to evac, which then brought us to the current situation."

"That makes sense," Liara timidly said. "Unstable mass effect fields and portals have been known to possibly tear holes in the space-time continuum. Sadly, nobody has survived to tell otherwise."

"Sorry to interrupt Commander, but the Console is on the other line, Shall I patch them through?" the pilot's voice boomed over the room's comms.

"Tell them I'll be with them in a minute Joker," Shepard responded, standing up.

"Roger that."

"Alright," Shepard began. "We'll talk more about this later. Chief, if you could stay a moment? The rest of you are dismissed."

Two "Yes Ma'am's rang out from the humans as they and the rest of the group dispersed.

Shepard turned towards the Chief, who quickly stood up and moved to attention.

"At ease," she called out automatically, and Master Chief visibly relaxed. "That's one hell of a story. And since you were honest, I'll be honest as well. You probably want to search for a way back to your time, but at this point in time, there's not much I can do to help you. The current threat of Saren has all my time, crew, and resources stretched to their limits."

"I understand," commented the Chief.

"However, with that being said, I can use all the help I can get at the moment. If you help me, I'll help you find a way home after this whole fiasco is wrapped up. If you don't want to join with me, which I would fully understand, I will drop you off at any location you desire to pursue your own goals."

Master Chief thought it over for a moment. Because of his lack of knowledge with his current location, getting dropped off somewhere was out of the question. Staying with Shepard looked the best option. Judging by what he'd already seen, she ran a tight ship and got things done. Trust was an issue, as always, but he had no other options. "I'll stay aboard and see what I can do."

"Outstanding," Shepard said, patting him on the back (she was too short to reach his shoulders). "I'll contact Anderson later on and get everything official. But for now, you'll be fine. You're free to explore the ship as you please."

"Thank you Ma'am," the Chief replied, standing to attention again and snapping off a crisp salute, which Shepard returned.

"So what now?" Cortana asked as the Master Chief made his way out of the briefing room.

"I need to think things over for a bit. Clear my mind."

"I suppose you're off to the gym, then." The Chief could sense Cortana's amusement.

"How'd you know?"

* * *

>Editing note: Im thinking of putting Cortana's speech in _italics_** so it will be easier to identify. Tell me if this is a good idea or not. Thanks**

End
file.